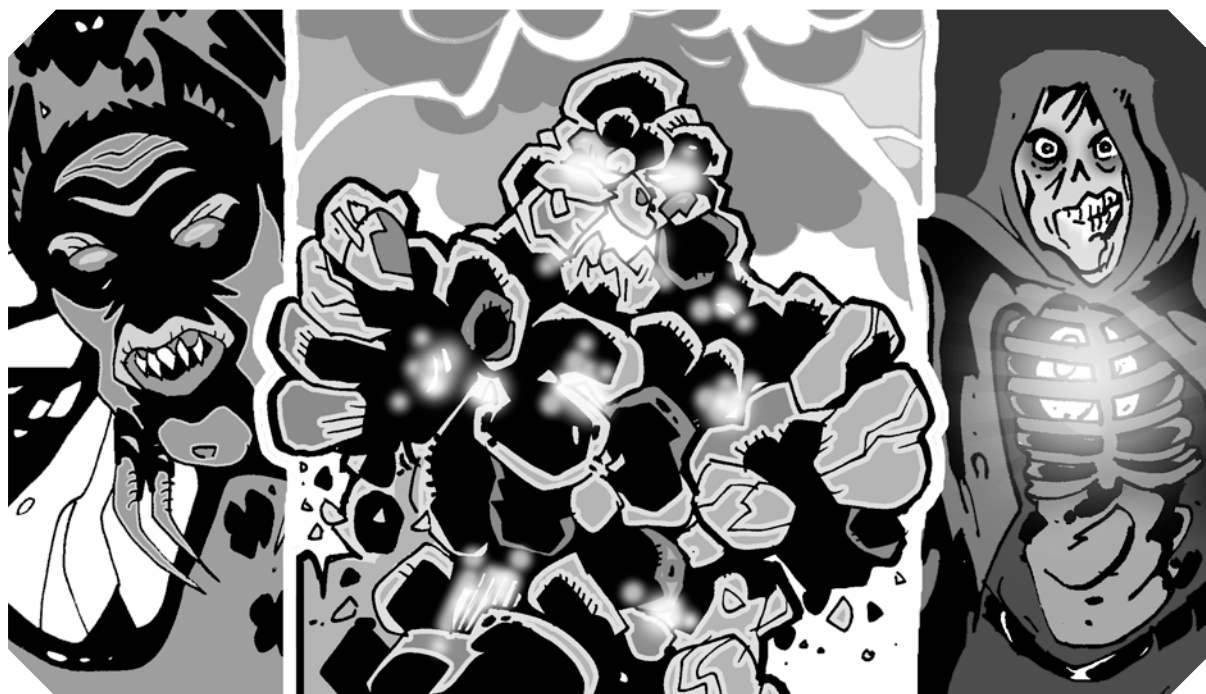


**GURPS**

Fourth Edition

# CREATURES OF THE NIGHT™

## VOL. 4



Written by **SCOTT MAYKRANTZ** and **JASON LEVINE**

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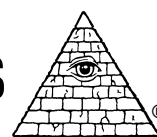
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# INTRODUCTION

Most beings, whether dull animals or intelligent characters, can be escaped, trapped, or forced into giving up. The creatures in this volume, however, are unified by their *tenacity*: Snakes capable of dissolving through any barrier, given time. A mass of animated rock, unerringly focused on its prey. A swarm of winged monstrosities, mindlessly attacking anyone nearby. Dehydrated undead with burning flesh who relentlessly seek water. An orb that surrounds itself with an ever-growing army of enslaved drones. A pack of demons that defend their toxic waste "home."

Your players can run, but they can't hide.

## About the Authors

Scott Maykrantz lives on an estate near Indianapolis. The high walls that surround the property are topped with black iron spikes. The doors are locked, day and night. Scott writes quietly in his room, waiting for the pretty woman in the white uniform to bring the medicine.

Jason Levine, better known to most as "Reverend Pee Kitty," has been a gamer for most of his life and a die-hard **GURPS** fan since the release of *Third Edition*. He enjoys making music, collecting Transformers, and praying to "Bob" for eternal salvation through alien intervention. He maintains a **GURPS** fansite at [www.mygurps.com](http://www.mygurps.com).

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# ACIDRIAD

The acidriad is a four- to six-foot-long serpent with a disturbingly human face. Short spines surround its gaping maw. Its features conspire to give it an undeniably *malicious* appearance.

*An acid-spitting snake  
that mimics human  
voices.*

## ACID ATTACKS

The acidriad has an acid gland that swells when its fight-or-flight reflex is triggered. After taking a second to prime the gland, the acidriad can spit 10-yard-long stream of acid that inflicts 2d corrosion damage. The gland holds enough acid for three shots per day, and slowly refills as the serpent sleeps. An acidriad that's unexpectedly awakened cannot spit for 2d+2 seconds.

An acidriad's jaw is incredibly strong and filled with rows of small, sharp, diamond-hard teeth. Its bite does 1d+1 cutting damage – enough to cripple a limb or sever a table leg – and armor protects at half DR. Worse, its acid acts as a follow-up attack, adding 1d corrosion damage to the bite! This works as long as the serpent has at least one shot of acid remaining, as biting expends far less acid than spitting does.

Out of combat, the acidriad is smart enough to use its acid to burn through barriers. Confronted with a wall or a door, it can dissolve a hole wide enough to slither through in less than a minute.

## SLITHERING AND SCAVENGING

Acidriads build their nests in hidden locations and then sneak through nearby areas searching for food. They usually hunt alone or in pairs, but a nest contains 3d serpents. On a world where acidriads are known to exist, people treat them as dangerous pests – any sign of acidriad activity prompts a call to an exterminator.

Acidriads often carry disease. If a contagion-spreading creature would spice up the adventure, the GM should design a suitable malady. See *Illness* (pp. B442-444).

## MIMICRY

Like a parrot, the acidriad repeats any unusual sounds it hears. It has a special affinity for human

voices, and likes to repeat long sentences in a tone and accent identical to the source. The creature isn't smart enough to know what the words mean . . . but that doesn't stop it from repeating an overheard conversation as it slithers through a passage, confusing those who hear it.

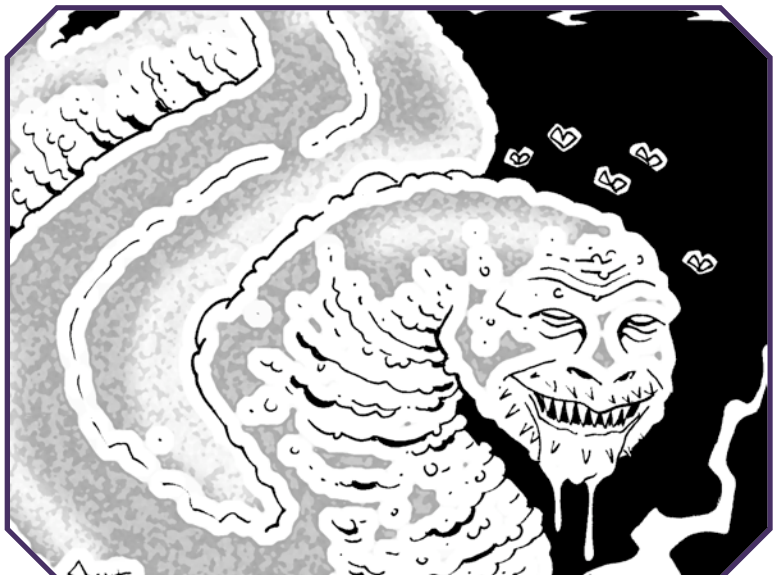
Acidriads use verbal cues to communicate with each other. They tend to fixate on a particular word or phrase and make it part of their interspecies communication. For example, to warn others of a possible threat, a particular group of serpents might yell "Waldo! It's Waldo!" in an old woman's voice.

Compelling sounds can distract acidriads. A victim can sing, laugh, cough, or deliver a brief speech to delay an attack. Roll a Quick Contest of IQ-2, or an appropriate skill (Public Speaking, Singing, etc.), versus the serpent's Will. The Voice advantage gives +2 in all cases; if the sound echoes, add +3. If the serpent loses, it will pause for seconds equal to its margin of loss.

## IT IS WHAT IT EATS

When an acidriad's diet is limited to one type of food, the chemical composition of its meals alters its acid jet, adding a secondary effect *in addition to* its normal corrosive damage. This is a simple way for the GM to make the acidriad more dangerous, by deciding that the creature has been eating one particular material for the past few days. Of course, it helps if the material exists in the campaign world – packaged food will not be available in a fantasy setting!

*Vegetarian:* The diet includes algae, grass, leaves, seaweed, etc. It's appropriate if the acidriad is encountered anywhere near a garden, hydroponics chamber, swamp, and so on. This makes the acid poisonous. Anyone damaged by the liquid must make a HT-4 roll immediately and once per minute after that, taking 1d-2 toxic damage on a failure. This ends after 10 minutes, if the subject succeeds at a resistance roll, or if antivenin is administered.





## Breeds

Like other vermin, acidriads adapt to almost any terrain or climate. Specific breeds have additional traits:

*Arctic:* Add white fur, giving DR 2 and Temperature Tolerance 2.

*Dungeon:* The environment has made it tougher. Add +3 ST, Compulsive Behavior (Collecting shiny objects) (9), DR 4, and Brawling at 13+.

*Forest:* The creature mimics bird calls, eats carrion, and can alter its skin color to hide. Add Chameleon 2 and Discriminatory Smell.

*Pet:* Add the Domestic Animal meta-trait. As a pet, the acidriad's mimicry, not its acid, is the primary attraction, so civilized masters normally remove the acid gland. Rougher owners – like orcs and post-apocalyptic gangs – are unlikely to do so!

*"Pit Snake":* On some worlds, acidriads are bred to fight each other. Choose any of the following: +2 ST, +3 DX, Berserk, Bloodlust, DR 1-3, Slave Mentality, or Brawling at 13+.

*Starship Vermin:* Add some level of G-Experience, Improved G-Tolerance, and Area Knowledge of the ship's deck plan.

*Carnivorous:* The acidriad consumes mostly meat, usually from nearby vermin (rodents, stray cats, small scavengers, etc.) or from human flesh, living or dead. Acidriad encountered in an urban or rural environment or near a graveyard may have this diet. This adds a nauseating smell to the acid; anyone struck by it suffers from Bad Smell for 1d hours. In addition, they must make a HT roll or be nauseated (p. B428) for the duration. If the acid did not penetrate DR, a person can avoid these effects by simply removing his armor.

*Garbage:* The creature eats cardboard, piece of rubber and plastic, soda cans, glass, and so on (but not plant material or rotting meat). At TL5+, acidriads encountered in or near landfills, Dumpsters, vacant lots, a spaceship's compactor, etc. likely feasts on waste material. This diet makes the acid flammable. Anyone who takes damage from a *bite* receives an extra point of burning damage (bypassing DR) from any incendiary attack until the wound is dressed. Anyone struck by a *jet* (whether it penetrated DR or not) catches fire (p. B434) if hit by any incendiary attack!

*Modern Packaged Food:* The acidriad's diet consists of MREs, TV dinners, airline meals, and anything else filled with preservatives, artificial flavors, and dozens of unpronounceable chemical additives. At TL7+, this is appropriate for acidriads encountered in malls, near grocery stores, in cupboards, in a ship's storeroom, etc. This makes the acid sticky; treat a *jet* as having a linked Binding attack with ST equal to twice the damage rolled. *Bites* are unaffected.

## USEFUL SKILLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

When hearing an acidriad mimic a voice from a distance, a successful Observation roll tells the listener that the sound isn't coming from the original speaker. Roll against Mimicry to

imitate the serpent or to trick it into making different sounds (like teaching a parrot). Use Animal Handling (Snakes) to gain its trust. Removing the acid gland without killing the creature requires Veterinary.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

Acidriads can be found in almost any setting. Outside their nest, they're encountered singly or in pairs. The serpents use their mimicry to scare intruders.

Creative handlers might use an acidriad to gather information. If suitably coaxed or charmed, a serpent could "record" a conversation and repeat it.

### Starship Fever (Science Fiction)

The heroes are crewmembers aboard a starship infested with acidriads. The creatures carry a bioengineered disease: a virus that causes its victims to become pathologically superstitious. Over a 24-hour period, victims gradually acquire Fearfulness, Confused, a Delusion, and a Phobia.

The heroes must work with the rest of the crew to find the disease's cause and exterminate the acidriads. But the serpents' voices trigger their superstitious fears – and the creatures chatter in the voices of crewmembers, including sneezes, whistles, singing, and laughter. Exterminators who cover or plug their ears will find their mission easier!

### In the Bellies of the Beasts (Dungeon Fantasy)

During a typical dungeon-crawl, the heroes encounter a single acidriad. If they kill it, they find a weak but useful magic item in its stomach (e.g., a Spell Stone or a Blessed Holy Symbol). Later on in the adventure, they encounter two more acidriads, one of which has swallowed a different item.

The explanation is simple: A large group of acidriads are nested in a room filled with treasure. They have gobbled some of the smaller, brightest items. As a result, several of the acidriads are carrying at least one small magic item.

The GM can use these creatures to assist the heroes. If they are in dire need of an edge over other opponents, the GM can send in a single acidriad carrying a powerful and useful item.

If the heroes track the acidriads, they find the nest – and the rest of the horde of treasure. The GM should feel free to make the heroes work hard for such a giant haul. He can add traps to the room or additional creatures on the way to it.

## ACIDRIAD

**ST 7; DX 13; IQ 3; HT 12.**

**Will 11; Per 11; Speed 6.25; Dodge 9; Move 6.**

**SM 1; 25 lbs.**

**Traits:** Corrosion Attack 1d (Accessibility, Requires at least one remaining acid stream; Follow-Up, Teeth); Corrosion Attack 2d (Limited Use, 3/day; Reduced Maximum Range, ×1/10; Takes Extra Time 1); Eidetic Memory; Infravision; Mimicry; Spines (Short); Striking ST 10 (One Attack Only, Bite); Teeth (Sharp; Armor Divisor (2)); Vermiform; Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Innate Attack (Breath)-13; Stealth-13.

# CLATTERNORN

A clatternorn is born when a storm strikes an area that contains a pile of stones, a stack of bricks, or any similar mound of loose masonry. As lightning flashes and thunder rattles windowpanes, the rocks roll together, climbing over each other to form a roughly human shape. Then the monster stands up, 12 feet tall, and lumbers forward.

The first person the clatternorn sees becomes its target. Once the creature locks its supernatural senses onto its victim, the chase begins. To get to its prey, it will destroy objects in its path, crawl over whatever it cannot smash, and trample innocent people.

*A humanoid made of rocks that chases its chosen victim through the rain.*

If the clatternorn kills its target, it crumbles, returning to its original form. The clatternorn suffers the same fate if the storm ends before it reaches its victim.

The clatternorn can be seen from a distance, a light in the storm. Its artificial life is a flame in its hollow body. The light shines through its eye sockets, mouth, and a gap in its chest. The intensity of the light corresponds to its health.

## IN THE RAIN, ON THE RUN

The clatternorn moves slowly. If the target sprints, hides, and makes smart decisions, he may survive. He can take advantage of the landscape; e.g., he might climb a steep hill, rendered slick and loose by the rain, compelling the clatternorn to struggle to drag its heavy body to the top.

Attempts to hide are futile – the clatternorn *will* eventually track down its target. It won't hesitate to smash through walls, knock down trees, and generally annihilate obstacles in its path, inflicting 6d+1 crushing damage per blow on such barriers. See *Damage to Objects* (pp. B483-484) for details.

An enchanted pile of rocks cannot float, so other useful tactics are swimming and escaping by boat. The clatternorn must make

an IQ roll to realize that it cannot follow. Failure means it proceeds and sinks beneath the waves, which extinguish its inner flame. Success means it waits patiently until the target returns, or until the storm ends and it crumbles.

A *brave* target can stop running and play dead. This might confuse the clatternorn. Roll a Quick Contest: Autohypnosis, Body Control, Meditation, or Will-3 against the creature's Perception. If the victim wins, the monster believes he's dead but still lingers nearby. Roll again every 20 seconds; if the clatternorn remains fooled for a full minute, it dies, thinking it has accomplished its goal. Should the victim lose a Contest, though, the clatternorn will become enraged and make an All-Out Attack! Future attempts to play dead fail automatically.

## IN COMBAT

The fire inside the clatternorn's body can be targeted through its eye sockets, mouth, and vitals, at the usual penalties (treat attacking the mouth like targeting the skull: 7). Alternatively, the GM can allow any critical success aimed at the head to pass through the eyes or mouth and hit the flame. Hits to these vulnerable locations ignore DR but get no special wounding multiplier.

The effects of such a hit depend on the attack. An internal explosion, or an attack composed of air or water, snuffs the flame instantly. A normal attack only does so if the clatternorn fails a HT roll, at a basic +4 but with a penalty equal to half the injury the attack causes. Either way, if the flame is extinguished, the clatternorn crumbles.

It's possible but not easy to kill a clatternorn with brute force. Its stone body is *dense*, allowing it to ignore most attacks while it batters opponents for 5d crushing damage. In addition, it can replace lost limbs if it's near a pile of suitable rubble. It lowers its stump into the rocks, where a new limb magically forms in 2d+2 seconds. This doesn't restore HP lost to the crippling injury – just use of the limb.

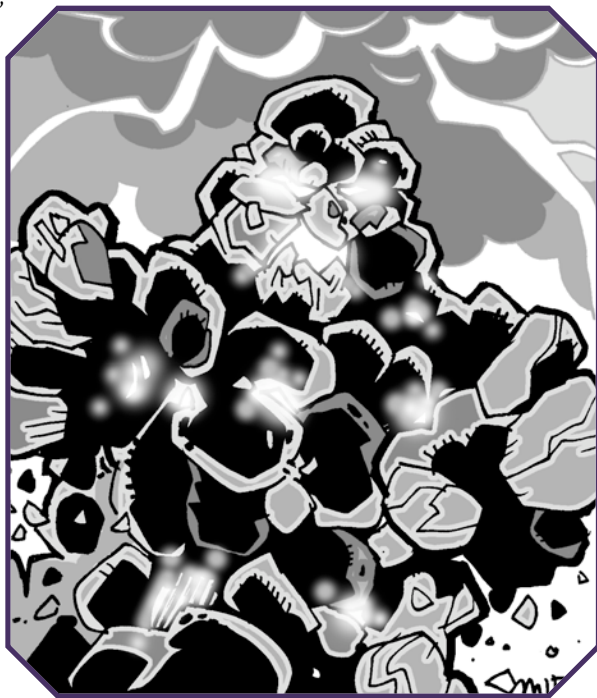
## THROWING ROCKS

The clatternorn is surrounded by potential weapons the moment it is "born." It can pick up a few rocks that are not part of its body and hurl them at people, cars, animals, windows, and so on. The creature could also snag rocks and heavy objects during chases. All of the rocks listed here take one second to grab (using one hand); they can be thrown on subsequent turns.

*Small Rock (up to 80 lbs.):* Can be thrown 48 yards for 4d-3 crushing damage.

*Medium-Sized Rock (up to 160 lbs.):* Can be thrown 32 yards for 4d+1 crushing damage.

*Large Rock (up to 320 lbs.):* Can be thrown 24 yards for 4d+5 crushing damage.



If a thrown rock crashes into a surface hard enough to shatter the stone (GM's decision), the attack inflicts 1d cutting fragmentation damage out to five yards (p. B414). If the clatternorn's target is too far away for it to hit accurately, the creature may choose to aim for the ground *deliberately* (for +4 to hit), hoping to shatter the rock and injure the target that way.

If necessary, the clatternorn can lift over a ton (2,560 lbs.), taking four seconds and using both hands. This makes for a poor weapon (Range 3 yards; 4d-3 crushing damage), but it can be terrifying for the adventurer trying to escape on a horse or a motorcycle only to find his mount picked up and thrown!

During combat, make a Geology roll to determine whether a special attack (such as explosives) is likely to work. If the clatternorn is mechanical, use Mechanic or Engineer instead.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

Clatternorn encounters may take place in any genre. In a fantasy world, a clatternorn is a stone elemental or golem that chases its prey through the rain. In a modern world, it appears suddenly, terrorizes people, and then disappears – forcing everyone to wonder “Did I really see that?”

The creatures might even be encountered in groups of two, three, or four. They may look identical or exhibit significant differences: one with an extra arm, another with a snake-like body (Vermiform), a third with a quadruped layout, and so on. In that case, each clatternorn may have its own target.

The encounter should always take place where rocks and stones have been stacked. The GM can expand this to bricks, car parts, dilapidated factory machines, a collapsed smokestack, or even a pile of coal inside a mine.

### *The Parish and the Standing Stones (Modern Day)*

The adventurers are parishioners of or frequent visitors to a small church in the English countryside. The pastor has been caught stealing from parish funds. Filled with guilt and fear, he wanders outside near a collection of standing stones (a miniature Stonehenge) just as a storm begins. The stones come together to form a clatternorn, which attacks, misses the pastor, and begins to chase him.

The pastor eventually meets the PCs. He might frantically pound on their door or run across them on the road. While he's trying to explain what's happening, the clatternorn arrives. Now *everyone* has to run to escape!

If the heroes want to save the pastor, they'll need to destroy his nemesis or evade it until the storm ends. But the pastor's sins haven't been absolved. Unless he offers appropriate penance, *two* clatternorns will be born in a storm a few days later – and this time, one will be coming for the pastor's friends.

### *War Machine (Weird War II)*

Outside a French city just after the Nazis lose a three-day battle with the Allies, a small group of paranormal investigators joins the troops. These are the PCs: black-ops agents searching for evidence that the Nazis are using sorcery to augment their conventional weapons.

The agents find themselves searching amongst the blasted tanks, corpses, crushed howitzers, and other carnage when the sun sets and a storm begins. In the rain, they find what they're looking for – a gold amulet in the coat of a dead Nazi officer. The corpse's chest is tattooed with the mark of a secret necromantic cabal.

Then the vehicles and weapons roll together, creating a clatternorn. The amulet was enchanted to summon the creature if it fell into the wrong hands. It has halftrack legs, a turret head, and machine-gun spines. Whoever carries the amulet is its target.

## Gods, Guards, and Mistakes

Why did the clatternorn appear? Was it purely by chance, or was there a reason? If the GM wants an explanation, choose one of the following:

*Divine Retribution:* The victim isn't random . . . the *gods* sent the clatternorn to punish him! It appears when he's near a pile of rocks (or machine parts) during a violent storm. This can also apply to someone who's holding a sacred item – but in that case, the clatternorn might only chase him until he drops the artifact.

*Protection:* The clatternorn exists to defend some area from intruders. In this case, the GM may disregard the storm altogether – if someone comes too close to the pile of rocks, the monster forms and attacks!

*Spellcasting:* A miscast spell creates the clatternorn. The critical failure *seems* to have no effect – until a storm begins. At that moment, the forces of wild magic, which had been lying dormant, manifest as the clatternorn.

## OTHER CLATTERNORNS

If a storm rages over a pile of machinery (e.g., a junkyard), a clatternorn may be born of random mechanical parts rather than stones. In this form, it looks like a cartoon robot, 20 to 30 feet tall, with a washing-machine head, hands made of rusty bicycle frames, and so on.

At this size, a human can squeeze *inside* it! He can extinguish the inner fire directly and then leap out before the clatternorn collapses.

The mechanical clatternorn's sharp edges make it more dangerous, however; it can slash victims with rusty steel claws for 7d-2 cutting damage. It leaks oil and gas, too – enough to start a small fire. Opponents who make smart use of flame attacks may be able to take advantage of this; see *Fragile* (pp. B136-137) for details.

In rare cases, a storm may smash enough windows to form a clatternorn from *broken glass*. This “shatternorn” is smaller, typically seven to nine feet tall, but relatively fast. Its razor-sharp limbs inflict 3d-1 cutting damage. Anyone who foolishly grapples with it suffers 1d cutting damage! Its relative fragility means it can be defeated through brute force – if its victim can survive for long enough.

## USEFUL SKILLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

A fleeing target will benefit from Climbing, Driving, Jumping, Riding, and of course *Running*. Boating and Swimming can save his life if he escapes into open water. Area Knowledge might help the victim find alleys, narrow passes, and so on that will impede the clatternorn more than they'll affect him.



If the agents need help, some friendly soldiers arrive. They heard the clatternorn, saw its shape in the pouring rain, and came to investigate. The troops will assist the PCs in the battle against the mechanical monster – but they'll never believe it in the morning!

If the GM wants to add one last surprise, the dead Nazi officer might come back to life, rising as an undead spell-caster who's bent on attacking the Allies and avenging his fallen comrades.

## CLATTERNORN

**ST** 40; **DX** 6; **IQ** 6; **HT** 14.

**Will** 13; **Per** 7; **Speed** 5.00; **Dodge** 8; **Move** 5.

**SM** +2; 4 tons.

**Traits:** Cannot Float; Detect (Target; Long-Range 1; Reliable +4); Divine Curse (Dies instantly if internal flame is snuffed out or storm subsides); Doesn't Eat or Drink; DR 5 (Partial, All but vitals); Feature (Neither has nor can spend FP); Fragile (Brittle); Hidebound; High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Incurious (6); Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous; No Blood; No Eyes); Low Empathy; Mute; No Sense of Humor; Regeneration (Very Fast; Limited, Regrowth Only); Regrowth (Accessibility, Requires appropriate materials); Social Stigma (Monster); Unfazeable; Unhealing (Total).

**Skills:** Brawling-8; Forced Entry-10.

## CLATTERNORN, GLASS ("SHATTERNORN")

**ST** 25; **DX** 8; **IQ** 6; **HT** 10.

**Will** 13; **Per** 7; **Speed** 6.00; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 6.

**SM** +1; 2,000 lbs.

**Traits:** Cannot Float; Claws (Sharp); Detect (Target; Long-Range 1; Reliable +4); Divine Curse (Dies instantly if internal flame is snuffed out or storm subsides); Doesn't Eat or Drink; DR 2 (Partial, All but vitals); Feature (Neither has nor can spend FP); Fragile (Brittle); Hidebound; High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Incurious (6); Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous; No Blood; No Eyes); Low Empathy; Mute; No Sense of Humor; Regeneration (Very Fast; Limited, Regrowth Only); Regrowth (Accessibility, Requires appropriate materials); Social Stigma (Monster); Spines (Long; Cutting instead of impaling); Unfazeable; Unhealing (Total); Vulnerability (Crushing x2).

**Skills:** Brawling-10; Forced Entry-11.

## CLATTERNORN, MACHINE

**ST** 60; **DX** 6; **IQ** 6; **HT** 14.

**Will** 13; **Per** 7; **Speed** 5.00; **Dodge** 8; **Move** 6.

**SM** +4; 30 tons.

**Traits:** Cannot Float; Claws (Sharp); Detect (Target; Long-Range 1; Reliable +4); Divine Curse (Dies instantly if internal flame is snuffed out or storm subsides); Doesn't Eat or Drink; DR 6 (Partial, All but vitals); Fragile (Flammable); Hidebound; High Pain Threshold; Incurious (6);

Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (No Brain; No Eyes; No Vitals); Low Empathy; Machine (p. B263); Mute; No Sense of Humor; Payload 5; Regeneration (Very Fast; Limited, Regrowth Only); Regrowth (Accessibility, Requires appropriate materials); Social Stigma (Monster); Unfazeable.

**Skills:** Brawling-7; Forced Entry-10.

## Adjusting the Power Level

The clatternorn may be too powerful, virtually guaranteeing that one or more player characters will be killed. Or, it could be too weak, posing no serious threat. (This is likely in high- and ultra-tech settings, where characters have access to armor-piercing lasers and powered armor.) Adjust the creature as necessary, using one or more of these suggestions.

### Less Powerful

- Replace some of the creature's ST with Lifting ST. This reduces the damage it does with punches and thrown rocks.
- It is too mindless to realize that it can throw rocks.
- It is sluggish. In an open environment, this should never be slower than the most dawdling party member; however, or it becomes no threat at all! (They can simply run away from it.) In an area with obstacles that may hamper the adventuring group but that the clatternorn can punch right through, the creature becomes more viable.
- Any attack against its weak spots results in it taking an All-Out Defense for 1d seconds after the attack, giving its prey time to run.
- It cannot enter any covered area (houses, dense forest, etc.) because it must remain exposed to the rain. Model this as a Dread or a Dependency (GM's preference). Note that just hiding in a house only works for a few minutes, as the thing can eventually cave in a wall with its massive punches.

### More Powerful

- Increase its ST and DR to be comparable to the PCs'.
- Raise its Move, though generally not more than a point above the fastest character.
- The very existence of the clatternorn makes the weather more hostile. Rain makes the ground more slippery (DX checks to avoid falling); lightning strikes nearby (HT check to avoid being stunned); fog rolls in (-2 to Vision and attack rolls); and so on.
- It can throw rocks from its body instead of having to stop and pick them up; they magically and instantly regenerate. This gives the clatternorn a ranged attack that it can perform without slowing down (at -2 for Move and Attack), as well as unlimited ammo. For a weaker variant, each rock costs the creature 1 HP.
- It is not vulnerable to its flame being snuffed out! The only way to kill it is to smash it to rubble. This is a *very* significant change, suitable for a game involving supers or battlesuit troopers. For an even scarier version, replace the Divine Curse with Supernatural Durability; the creature must first be reduced to -HP, *then* be submerged or otherwise have its internal flame blown out.

# FLUTTER DEVIL

A flutter devil resembles a horribly misshapen cross between a butterfly and a bat. It has a vaguely human face and reptilian flesh.

Flutter devils are usually encountered in groups of 10 to 30. They're found in trees, in the rafters of old barns, under bridges, and in sewer drainpipes. When initially stumbled upon, flutter devils are often mistaken for bats.

*A swarm with a venomous bite that causes its victims to go unnoticed.*

## VANISHING VICTIMS

Flutter devils attack by flying at a victim, biting out tiny chunks of flesh, and then retreating. As long as the victim is having trouble defending or escaping, they'll keep coming back for more!

Flutter devils use the rules under *Swarm Attacks* (p. B461). Each swarm of 10 devils inflicts 1 HP of "damage" (see below) per second. Armor protects only if it covers the *entire* body; treat a victim who has any exposed body part as unarmored. A swarm is dispersed after losing 8 HP – but two dispersed swarms will regroup into a single new swarm (takes 2d seconds) and renew the attack.

Flutter devil venom causes the wounds to stay open, but the victim suffers no pain, infection, or significant bleeding. The only obvious problem is his appearance – he has chunks ripped from his body! The venom causes a strange supernatural mutation as it spreads throughout his bloodstream, however: he becomes a wallflower, hard to notice or remember. He is visible, but vanishes from memory. At some point, he'll notice what's happening.

The victim of a flutter devil attack doesn't actually lose HP – not initially. Instead, he acquires variants of the Chameleon and Silence advantages. Everyone around him must make a Perception roll at a penalty equal to his "injuries" even to notice him. (Other flutter devil victims are an exception; they can see each other just fine.) For example, an individual bitten for 8 HP of "damage" would be completely ignored by anyone who can't make a Perception roll at 8.

First aid, healing spells, and similar abilities will restore the victim to a less-injured appearance but have no effect on his ability to be noticed. Keep track of any HP restored, though. When the affliction wears off, any remaining injuries become real (see *The Slumbering Swarm*, below).

The victim's affliction is both advantageous and dangerous. On one hand, he could, for instance, sneak into a theater with ease. On the other hand, he's likely to be run over trying to cross the street to that theater – and he'd have trouble getting medical assistance afterward.

Finally, the vanishing effect is reversed for the flutter devils. For every point of "damage" a victim takes, the devils get +1 to Perception rolls to locate him.

## THE SLUMBERING SWARM

After a swarm of flutter devils has eaten enough fresh flesh, they retreat to their lair to hibernate. They find a place to hide, curl up together, and grow a slick grayish skin over themselves, until they look like a partially deflated rubber ball. Hibernation lasts 1d days, during which time the devils are particularly vulnerable – a monster-hunter could easily wipe out the entire swarm with a shotgun blast or fire. When the creatures emerge from hibernation, they're hungry for new victims and the swarm is larger by 1-3 members.

During hibernation, the devils conserve their supernatural energy within their bodies. Their venom's vanishing effect dissipates as a result. The moment they enter hibernation, the Perception penalty drops by one point every 10 minutes. Their victims' wounds start to bleed and ache as the affliction reverts to actual injury. When the Perception penalty reaches 0, the effect ends permanently. Those who were bitten suffer the full effects of their original injuries, less any healing received in the meantime.

## USEFUL SKILLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

Victims who cannot understand what is happening to them may make an Observation roll while watching how others react to the devils' bites. On a success, the GM should reveal exactly what the venom does.

To determine the chemical composition of the venom, use Poisons or Alchemy.

Victims may apply the Perception roll penalty as a *bonus* to conventional uses of Filch, Shadowing, Stealth, etc. If nobody knows you're there, these skills are much more likely to succeed, even at default!

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

Flutter devils strike from dark and creepy places, scaring their victims. Confusion follows fear when those bitten notice that their wounds aren't normal! A flutter devil encounter should eventually give the PCs a chance to explore their strange new "gifts."

### Immunity

Some people are immune to flutter devil venom – the bites are painful, and bleed normally, but cause no supernatural effect. What grants immunity? Choose one of the following:

*Healing Abilities:* The body chemistry of anyone who can heal using spells or advantages suppresses the venom's effects.

*Magery:* The mana inherent in a victim with this trait counteracts the venom.

*Rare Plants:* Select a rare plant as a source of immunity. The victim must eat the plant raw or in a stew. The effect lasts for 3d hours.



## “Add One Pinch of Flutter Devil . . .”

Some alchemists find the unique venom of a flutter devil useful. Flutter Antivenin is a wholly unique creation with its own formulary; the remainder of the following list are variants of existing elixirs that use the same basic recipe as the standard version, except with flutter devil venom added. All amounts of venom given are *per dose* of the elixir being made.

At the GM’s discretion, anyone completely unfamiliar with the creature (yet somehow in possession of the venom and the knowledge that it can be added to the recipe) takes an extra -2 familiarity penalty (p. B169) to make any of these elixirs.

### *Flutter Antivenin*

When administered to someone under the effects of the flutter devil’s venom, the subject does *not* take the damage later when the creatures start hibernating.

This is a highly specialized creation – even an unrealistic “alchemical supermarket” will only carry this on a 6 or less on 3d. This rarity is the sole reason for its high price; if someone has a reason to make and sell this in batches, the price quickly drops to \$120/\$250.

*Duration:* Instant.

*Form:* Any but pastille.

*Cost:* \$350/\$550.

*Recipe:* \$50 and venom from one flutter devil; 1 week; defaults to Alchemy-1.

### *Pseudo-Invisibility*

This is a variant on the Invisibility elixir (*GURPS Magic*, p. 216), created with the venom from four flutter devils; it typically sells for \$3,600/\$7,200. Once used, the subject is not actually invisible; instead, everyone around him is at -10 to notice him. When the effect wears off, the penalty drops by -1 per minute until expired, giving him time to get to safety.

### *Improved Stealth*

It is possible to mix the venom from two flutter devils into the creation of a Stealth elixir (*GURPS Magic*, p. 214); this raises the cost to \$750/\$3,000. The subject’s Stealth skill increases by 1d+2 points instead of 1d; all other effects are unchanged.

## *Saint Michael’s Sanctuary (20th Century)*

While exploring an abandoned building a few blocks from St. Michael Hospital, the heroes are attacked by a swarm of flutter devils. Heavily injured, they make it to the hospital’s emergency room, where the staff begins to treat them . . . and promptly forgets that they’re there.

As the heroes discover the venom’s effects, the flutter devil swarm emerges from the abandoned building. The PCs are safe inside St. Michael – but not for long. They’ll need to devise a way to kill the swarm before it enters the hospital looking for them, and finds *new* prey.

## *The Alchemist (Fantasy)*

The adventurers are hired by an alchemist to capture a swarm of flutter devils for use in an invisibility potion. The alchemist will pay handsomely for this vital ingredient.

In the process of capturing the little creatures, the heroes are wounded. Returning to the alchemist, they see that he has been tied up by thieves ransacking his home. The adventurers can use their new abilities to sneak past the thieves and save the alchemist.

## *Burglary (Fantasy)*

The adventurers are members of the Thieves’ Guild, sent to burgle the city’s treasury. To ensure their success, the Guildmaster breaks out a secret weapon: a cage full of flutter devils. The thieves are ordered into the cage, where they’re attacked by the flutter devils. They’ve been left healing potions and commanded to communicate with their superiors by writing statements on paper.

The ordeal over, the thieves can use their new capabilities to sneak past the guards and enter the treasury vault with ease. But once they’re inside, the flutter devils begin to hibernate and the thieves lose their gifts. Unable to rely on their

ability to be forgotten, they now face the *real* challenge: how to escape!

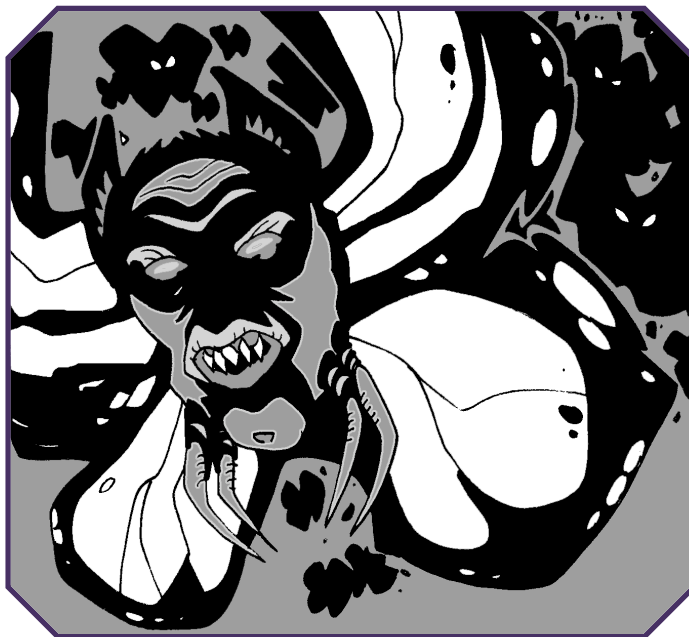
## FLUTTER DEVIL

**ST 2; DX 13; IQ 3; HT 13.**

**Will 10; Per 11; Speed 6.50; Dodge 9; Move 6 (Air).**

**SM 6; 1 lb.**

**Traits:** 3D Spatial Sense; Affliction 1 (Advantage, Chameleon (Always On; No Signature; Variant) and Silence (Always On; No Signature; Variant); Cumulative; Extended Duration, Special; Follow-Up, Special); Appearance (Ugly); Flight (Air Move 13); No Legs (Aerial); Teeth (Sharp); Wild Animal.



# TRANTID

A trantid is an abomination that forms in the presence of an intelligent creature that's dying of thirst. If the victim stumbles (or crawls) in a circle, a skull and some bones lie within the circle, *and* the local supernatural energy is just right, a trantid is born. A layer of flesh grows over the skull to form its misshapen face. Glowing black eyes appear in its empty eye sockets. The bones form jointed legs, evenly distributed around the skull.

*A ghastly head with legs,  
drawn to water.*

## WALKING TO WATER

The trantid ignores the dying individual and immediately walks toward the closest source of fresh, clean water. The water doesn't have to be flowing – it could be a well or a pool – but there must be at least a gallon of it. The creature doesn't know how far it must walk – it just keeps going until it reaches its goal.

Although the trantid heads straight for the water, it may have to go around obstacles. This extends its journey but has no significant effect on its pace. The creature constantly rotates its head, looking all around as its legs carry it along.

## THE CREATURE'S DEFENSES

The trantid's skin gets hotter as it nears the body of water. Halfway to its destination, its skin causes 1d-3 burning damage to the touch and it gains +1 DR against all attacks, as the heat deforms weapons and absorbs energy (the GM may rule that certain attacks are completely unaffected by extreme heat and ignore this DR). At three-quarters of the way, this increases to 1d-1 burning damage and +2 DR; at nine-tenths, to 1d+2 burning damage and +4 DR. By the time its destination is in sight, the trantid is *sizzling* hot: it inflicts 2d burning damage and has +6 DR, and flammable objects – including clothing – will ignite after more than a second of contact.

The trantid's eyes are like polished obsidian. Anyone making eye contact must roll a Quick Contest of Will, with the trantid taking the range penalties on p. B550. Those who lose are mentally stunned, but may try a Will roll every second to snap out of it. Loss by 5 or more, or a critical failure, means the victim *also* suffers a horrible headache (treat as severe pain; see p. B428) that lasts for five minutes times his margin of loss.

## WHEN IT GETS THERE

When the trantid reaches water, it dives in and dissolves. Its glowing-hot body boils the water almost instantly, sending scalding jets of steam skyward. A small reservoir (under 1,000 gallons) will evaporate completely. A medium-sized body of

water (such as a large fountain or trough) will partially boil away, leaving only a fraction of its original volume. There's little effect on a larger quantity of water (pond, lake, etc.) – the trantid simply melts away, surrounded by a boiling pocket and rising steam. The water remains safe to drink, although it may be too hot at first.

To save the water, the trantid must be stopped. It can be trapped, killed with weapons, or delayed with a barrier. A trapped trantid will claw and scrape at its prison. The water it's after can be moved away in a suitable vessel. If the water is in a closed container, the creature will try to melt its way through. Any trantid prevented from reaching water for a full minute starts to dissolve, losing 1 HP per second until only the bare skull remains.

## A HORDE OF WALL-WALKING HEADS

Although the trantid is meant to be encountered on its own, a gathering of trantids can provide even more fun. To make a group, the creation must occur in a place with lots of skulls and bones. But GMs don't have to require the characters to circle around the entire collection of bones. Instead, if one trantid emerges, all of the other skulls in the area follow.

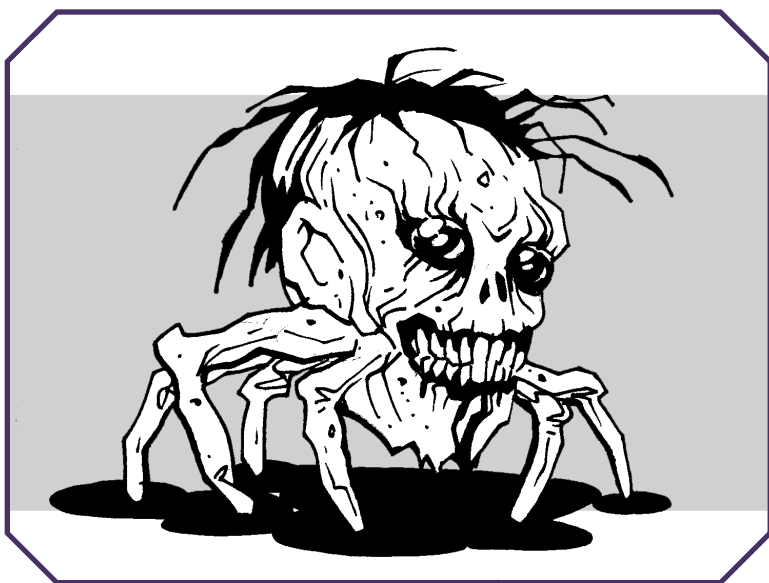
The group will look like a horde of giant, misshapen beetles at a distance. While a single trantid can easily maneuver around barriers and through openings, the horde can become stuck. Because of this, add Clinging and Super Jump 2. With this upgrade, the creatures can jump two yards straight up or nine yards forward – twice that, with a running start – and cling to whatever they can't jump over.

### In Deadly Pursuit

To extend the range of adventures, GMs can replace *water* with a different substance. The trantid could quest for gold, diamonds, oil, coal, toxic waste, magic items (especially Powerstones!), acid, radioactivity, or gasoline.

If the substance is still liquid, the creature immerses itself when it arrives, just as it does with water. However, the result could be far more dangerous! (The trantid will be immune to the effects, of course.) Toxic waste and acid boil off in choking waves of smog, doing toxic or corrosion damage to everyone nearby. Oil and gasoline ignite at the trantid's touch, quickly forming thick, billowing smoke clouds. Radioactive "heavy water" turns into radioactive steam; see p. B435 for details.

For solid items, the trantid falls upon them, causing the objects to melt. Magic items lose their enchantment as they turn into liquid or burst into flames. Precious stones (even nigh-indestructible diamonds) char and flake away. Gold melts and runs off, permanently contaminated by the thick black smudge where the trantid scalded it.



If they emerge in a graveyard, roll Fright Checks at -2. Observing a dozen skulls crawl up and skitter across the ground is an unsettling experience!

The holes left from the trantids burrowing to the surface allow easy access to the graves. The narrow cavities can be expanded through digging or supernatural means. The contents of the graves are unchanged since their burial, with the exception of a missing skull.

## USEFUL SKILLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

In worlds where the trantid is known, a Tracking, Occultism-2, or Survival (Desert)-4 roll will identify its strange, circular tracks.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

Trantid encounters should involve travel and *thirst*. A typical adventure takes a weak, unhealthy group toward the promise of fresh, clean water. Don't bother calculating the exact distance – just make sure the heroes are suitably desperate when they meet the monster.

Along the way, the water-seekers can meet other individuals, creatures, and obstacles. They could encounter a caravan, a congregation of pilgrims on their way to a holy site, a sacred tomb, another thirsty group, *other* weird entities, or a natural barrier such as a rock face or a canyon.

Although trantids usually appear in the desert, people can be desperate for clean water almost anywhere: a foul swamp, an abandoned city, a drought-stricken forest, and so on.

If the body of water is small, make sure the players have some idea of the trantid's nature, so they can try to keep it from it entering and evaporating the water. If there's enough water, of course, this won't be a problem.

### The Oasis (Any Genre)

The heroes are in the desert, dying of thirst. As they stop to rest, one of them stumbles in a circle and a trantid emerges from the sand.

The trantid's skull is slightly oversized and has only one eye. It's formed from a *cyclops* skull. The creature lifts itself up on fat, stubby legs and starts to walk across the dunes.

The trantid is heading toward an oasis that's home to a self-sufficient community called Orpatch. Its people have recently rebuilt the damage suffered when a berserk cyclops attacked. Dozens were killed, including the local leader. The three who chased the cyclops into the desert and slew it are the new leaders.

When the thirsty heroes arrive with the trantid, the locals recognize the cyclops' skull and panic. The PCs can help kill the trantid. If it reaches the oasis' pool, it boils away half the water before it disappears.

If *that* happens, the villagers will be outraged! They'll attempt to capture the heroes and put them on trial. Should the PCs escape, they'll have to figure out how to survive in the desert (or try to sneak back to the oasis later). If they're captured, they'll have a few days to regain their strength and devise escape plans or a defense for the trial. Some of the villagers may see them as innocent and offer to help.

## TRANTID

**ST** 5; **DX** 9; **IQ** 2; **HT** 12.

**Will** 15; **Per** 8; **Speed** 5.25; **Dodge** 8; **Move** 5.

**SM** 5; 6 lbs.

**Traits:** Affliction 1 (Will; Based on Will; Malediction 2; Secondary Severe Pain with Extended Duration, x5; Vision-Based; Vision-Based, Reversed); Burning Attack 2d (Accessibility, Only near water, drops off with distance; Aura; Melee Attack, Reach C); Create 30 (Water; Destruction Only; Limited Use, Once; Trigger, Death); Detect (Water; Cosmic, No die roll required; Long-Range 2); Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; DR 2; DR +6 (Accessibility, Only near water, drops off with distance); Extra Legs\*; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (No Blood; No Brain; No Eyes; No Neck; No Vitals; Unliving); Obsession (Seek water) (6); Self-Destruct; Social Stigma (Monster).

\* Leg count depends on the number of bones nearby when the trantid forms, typically between four and eight.

*A party of necromancers might create a horde of trantids to help them get into graves more easily.*



# THE VOICE OF DARKNESS

*As you approach the cloaked figure, you see a feral glow in its eyes. You step closer. The glow pulses pale green, illuminating the creature's face. Its decaying flesh is wrinkled and worn, like crumpled parchment. It smiles, tilting its head back. The green light shines out of its open mouth. It speaks . . . and everything turns to darkness.*

## SLAVES, HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

The Voice of Darkness is a green glass orb embedded in a corpse's torso. It hides its decaying flesh with a coat, baggy clothing, or blankets. In sharp contrast to its monstrous appearance, its voice is deep, rich, and soothing.

The Voice can enslave anyone who hears it speak. If it utters so much as a word, roll a Quick Contest of Will with everyone in earshot (approximately 30 feet). Anyone who loses is turned into a hypnotized *drone*.

Drones lose IQ at the rate of one point per hour until they reach IQ 7, at which time they have the traits described under *The Drones* (p. 13). They retain enough intelligence to perform ordinary tasks, but cannot engage in intellectual conversations, learn new things, or perform challenging mental tasks. They lock into a routine, working and going through the motions, always aware of their master – and protective of it. Once enslaved, drones don't make further resistance rolls unless forced to act against their principles (see *Mind Control*, p. B68). In that case, they resist with their *original* Will; the IQ reduction doesn't affect this.

Drones appear normal except for one telltale clue: their irises turn green. A drone's eye color is intense enough to attract attention during eye contact. It isn't bright enough to be noticed from across the room, however.

The Voice of Darkness prefers to create drones in places where people have little reason to leave, such as nursing homes, boarding schools, farms, and military bases.

## RESISTING THE HYPNOTIC COMMAND

Individuals who cannot hear the Voice are safe. This includes those who cover their ears, as well as the deaf.

A drone's friends can attempt to "deprogram" him. Away from the Voice's lair, make daily Psychology rolls to treat the victim. Success allows a new resistance roll that day, at a cumulative +1 per day.

## NEW BODIES

The Voice of Darkness' flesh decays steadily. To halt this decomposition, the Voice must constantly enslave new drones. In game terms, the Voice loses 2 HP at midnight on any day during which it fails to create a new drone. At 0 HP, its body begins to fall apart. At HP, the corpse decays completely, leaving only the green glass orb.

Once it has enslaved everyone in the vicinity of its lair, the Voice of Darkness seeks new victims, commanding its drones (through Telesend) to find them. The Voice is paranoid and careful. Its lair is always temporary, and it moves to a new location every few days.

In worlds where the Voice of Darkness is known, the drones' subdued behavior will attract attention as their numbers grow. Eventually, the locals will grow suspicious and probably confront the Voice, forcing it to flee. If it escapes, the Voice must search for a new lair and enslave a new set of drones before its body rots away.

## IN COMBAT

The Voice of Darkness always has a few bodyguards. If forced to defend itself, it will use a sword, knife, pistol, or other weapon common in the setting.

Due to its appearance, face-to-face confrontations with the Voice are very disturbing. The creature uses this to its advantage by making an Intimidation attempt at the start of combat.

## USEFUL SKILLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

Mental Strength and Mind Block can replace Will when resisting enslavement. Body Language and Observation can discover that something is wrong with the drones, while Psychology will reveal them to be ordinary people under some form of hypnotic control. Individuals who want to pretend to be drones (e.g., to infiltrate the Voice's lair) require Acting and Disguise.

*A solitary, scheming zombie that enslaves those who hear it speak.*

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

In any Voice of Darkness encounter, the GM should determine how many drones the Voice currently has enslaved and how many *potential* drones are in the area. This will give him a good estimate of how long the Voice has been in that location, and how long it's likely to stay. It will also provide some idea of how many non-drones are around to discover what's going on.

In order to infiltrate the Voice's lair, intruders must pretend to be dull, and cover their eyes or wear green contact lenses. If the Voice discovers intruders, it will speak and enslave them.

### *Locked in the Eternal Dream (Modern Day)*

The Voice of Darkness has enslaved everyone in the compound of a cult, the Eternal Dream Fellowship. Now it needs new recruits. One day, when most of the cultists have left the compound to seek new members, the heroes sneak inside.

The heroes are enemies of the Fellowship. They might be government agents, private citizens with a score to settle, or hired deprogrammers or investigators. They slip into the nearly empty compound and discover the Voice of Darkness. The Voice is protected by a handful of bodyguards – the only drones still in the area.

If the PCs are lucky, they might resolve this confrontation before the rest of the cultists come back. Otherwise, the other drones arrive during the fight. The heroes will have to think fast to escape! If they don't, the drones will attempt to capture them rather than kill them. This will give them a second chance to defeat the Voice.

### *The Constellation Express (19th-Century Horror, Modern Day, Near Future)*

The adventurers are on a three-day train trip aboard the Constellation Express. They meet a young couple, Kate and Tom Dobson, who are bright and witty, and who enjoy gossiping about the other passengers. After the first night, the Dobsons lose their sense of humor. They're convinced that something very strange is happening on the train – and they're right!

A Voice of Darkness and its drones occupy one of the last cars. The Voice's mind-controlled servants bring passengers and personnel to the Voice to be enslaved. The creature's influence is spreading.

On the second day, as the train enters the mountains, the adventurers can't help but notice that the Dobsons are right.



They can team up with the young couple to investigate the situation and protect each other. At this point, the GM is free to introduce a variety of events: the train suddenly stops in the mountains, the heroes have to climb on top of the cars to escape the drones, once-trusted passengers become enslaved, the PCs must take over one of the cars or detach the Voice's car, and so on.

On the morning of the third day, the train comes out of the mountains. At this point, if all else fails, the adventurers could leap from the Express to save themselves!

## THE VOICE OF DARKNESS

**ST 12; DX 12; IQ 10; HT 14.**

**Will 14; Per 11; Speed 6.50; Dodge 9; Move 7.**

**SM 0; 150 lbs.**

**Traits:** Appearance (Monstrous); Callous; Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Draining (Midnight; Must create a drone); Fragile (Unnatural); High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (No Blood; No Brain; Unliving); Mind Control (Based on Own Will; Extended Duration, Permanent; Hearing-Based; Independent; No Memory; Nuisance Effect, Victim's eyes turn green; Puppet, Variant); Mindlink (Drones); Obsession (Gather more drones) (6); Paranoia; Possession (Accessibility, Corpses only); Social Stigma (Monster); Special Rapport (Drones); Telesend (Accessibility, Drones and those in direct contact with orb only); Unaging; Voice.

**Skills:** Intimidation-15.

**Notes:** These stats describe the Voice when inhabiting a corpse. As an immobile orb, it has DR 2, HP 4.

## Without the Shell of Skin

If the Voice of Darkness cannot find a new body in time, its corpse "shell" decays and the green orb falls to the ground. The orb is solid glass, so it won't break unless struck by a powerful blow.

Without a body, the Voice hibernates. If anyone touches the orb, the Voice will instantly awaken and attempt to enslave the person who touched it. Its first command will be for the drone to encourage everyone nearby to touch it as well. From this starting point, it uses its drones to find it a corpse, and starts gathering a new army of drones.

## THE DRONES

**ST 10; DX 10; IQ 7; HT 10.**

**Will 7; Per 7; Speed 5.00; Dodge 8; Move 5.**

**SM 0; 135 lbs.**

**Traits:** Cannot Learn; Clueless; Reprogrammable; Special Rapport (Voice of Darkness); Supernatural Feature (Intense green eyes).

**Skills:** Area Knowledge (Local)-11; ordinary job skill that doesn't require regular social interaction, at 12.

# WASTE-STALKER

Waste-stalkers look like large, demonic dogs without skin. Slick and ugly, they have small eyes, a gaping mouth, no neck, and six legs.

Although native to Hell, waste-stalkers may be encountered anywhere pits of filth, sewage, or toxic waste can be found. If the pit is poisonous enough, a passage to Hell opens beneath the muck and the waste-stalkers take up residence. They lurk there, leaping out and attacking anyone who comes close.

*Watchdogs of a doorway to Hell.*

## THE PACK AROUND THE PIT

Anyone approaching the toxic pit will be attacked by 1d+2 waste-stalkers. They bite for 2d impaling damage or kick (at 2 to hit) for 2d+1 crushing damage. Waste-stalkers are resistant to normal attacks, especially impaling and piercing weapons.

The stench of the pack's lair makes the encounter even more challenging. Anyone inhaling the fumes must make a HT-2 roll or be nauseated (see p. B428). Nausea lasts for minutes equal to the margin of failure. Failure by 5 or more, or a critical failure, means the victim also *vomits* (treat as retching; see p. B429). Success staves off the effect for minutes equal to margin of success (minimum one minute). The No Sense of Smell/Taste disadvantage doesn't affect this roll, but Protected Taste/Smell (natural or technological) gives +5.

Waste-stalkers share a rudimentary mental connection with each other. If one is killed, it sends out a psychic death cry. Upon hearing the call, a replacement journeys up from Hell, arriving in 4d+10 seconds. If the beasts are outnumbered, or the fight clearly turns against them, the GM should make a single roll against their Tactics. Success means they summon enough waste-stalkers to even the odds (roll randomly for *each* monster's arrival time). On a failure by 3 or less, they summon a single reinforcement. Any greater failure, or a critical failure, means they take no action, and won't roll again unless the battle becomes even more one-sided.

Replacements stop coming – and the gateway to Hell vanishes – once all the beasts are killed. This could be from a single simultaneous attack, or a series of quick, deadly attacks carried out before the next reinforcement(s) arrive.

## SIDE EFFECTS

Waste-stalkers fear the color white. Coming from a world of darkness and shadow, the purity of white makes them cringe and howl. Exposure to someone dressed partially in white (such as a white shirt) forces a Fright Check at +4. Anyone dressed entirely in white causes a Fright Check at +2. If the individual is *completely* white – including his face and all equipment – the Fright Check is unmodified. The creatures' den is so filthy that it will be hard for anyone to stay white for long, though! Assume that white articles become too dirty to have an effect after 1d+4 seconds of exposure to the foul air and splashing muck.

The waste-stalkers' demonic aura extends far enough to affect religious objects. Any religious book, symbol, icon, or work of art within a quarter mile becomes stained – it looks as if someone smeared dirt on it. The GM can extend the aura to half a mile or more if the number of waste-stalkers around the pit is extremely large.

Ordinary animals can sense waste-stalkers and their gateway, and will avoid both completely. Anyone investigating the pit may notice the lack of birds or other animals nearby. As well, animals panic when the waste-stalkers appear; for example, if the passage opens in a pit next to a stable, the livestock will go berserk, break out, and run away. Beasts unable to leave the area become monstrous and sickly. They appear to be suffering from a supernatural form of leprosy. Modify their stats as follows: +5 ST, +5 HP (for a total of +10), Appearance (Hideous), Immunity to Metabolic Hazards, and Injury Tolerance (Unliving).

## LOCATING THE GATEWAY

The gateway to Hell is under the pit, like the drain at the bottom of a swimming pool, so it's difficult to detect. The following methods work:

*Magic:* Gate spells, and items enchanted with Gate spells, function normally. Thus, Seek Gate can locate the portal and Scry Gate will work – *if* the caster is willing to swim into the toxic waste! Control Gate can close the portal, but is resisted by the pit's original target number at +5 (see *The Devil's Mouth Opens*, p. 15).

*Special Senses:* Any suitable Detect (for Demons, Evil, etc.) will work. Hyperspectral Vision with an appropriate Extended (Special) enhancement (from *GURPS Powers*) will detect the gateway from a distance – make a Perception roll at +10, minus normal range penalties. Magery gives a Perception roll at a bonus equal to Magery, if the mage can see the *portal*; seeing just the *pit* still permits a roll, but at 5. Other advantages

## Adventures in Hell

Heroes who are very brave, and outfitted with the right equipment, could dive into the muck, enter the gateway, and explore the Underworld.

They will arrive in the sewers of Hell – a labyrinth of gigantic pipes with a gooey river of filth flowing along the bottom half of the cylindrical passages. The river glows, illuminating the area with a pale green light. Along the upper half of the pipes, the heroes find walkways and corridors, leading to other sections of the sewers and small rooms.

Events and encounters are random. Sudden shrieks of pain echo past like gusts of wind. A skeletal family floats by on a raft. Amphibious beasts slither out of the muck looking for food. Strange surveillance pods mounted along the ceiling watch everything.

Without special powers or gadgets, the heroes cannot reach another section of Hell – they're stuck in the sewers. But it should be enough to give them a taste of the Underworld, perhaps whetting their appetite for future adventures.



may allow a Perception roll, perhaps at a penalty, if the GM feels they could sense such a thing (e.g., Para-Radar, defined as sending out cross-dimensional pulses).

**Ultra-Tech Equipment:** Any superscience sensor capable of detecting dimensional rifts, quantum wormholes, or similar phenomena can detect the gateway, if properly tuned; this requires an Electronics Operation (Sensors) roll at 2.

## USEFUL SKILLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

If the heroes know what they're getting into, a roll against Occultism or a suitable Hidden Lore specialty will reveal that they can protect themselves by wearing white. On a good roll, the GM may wish to add further helpful details.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

Waste-stalker encounters are often straightforward: The heroes are attacked and have a chance to discover the passage. The adventure might start before that, though, if the PCs find clues that waste-stalkers are present (e.g., they spot diseased



animals nearby, or hear tales that someone has been attacked). Encounters take place in hazardous areas full of filth and waste – sewage-treatment plants, junkyards, landfills, chemical or medical waste storage sites, dumps of animal carcasses, “killing fields” littered with human cadavers, large Dumpsters, etc.

### Garbage Detail (Near Future)

The heroes are Municipal Patrol Officers (MPOs) in Detroit during the second decade of the 21st century. They're outfitted with TL9 weapons, sensors, radios, and medical gear.

The MPOs are patrolling an industrial area owned by Sanitation Specialists Inc., a mega-corporation with significant influence at City Hall. They discover an illegal chemical waste dump. It's toxic, dangerous, and likely to cause city-wide illness if not sealed immediately.

Then they see the waste-stalkers. They defend themselves against the creatures, but one of their fellow MPOs (an NPC) is pulled into the dump. Outnumbered and terrified, the survivors flee.

The MPOs want to find their fallen comrade and shut down the dump, but their superiors intervene. The mega-corp executives don't want it touched! What will the heroes do?

## The Devil's Mouth Opens

When does a pit of waste and filth spontaneously create a passage to the Underworld? If the pit is sufficiently large, poisonous, and old, a “triggering event” – a nearby supernatural occurrence – may open a gateway. When such an event occurs in the area around the pit, determine the target number as follows:

Age of Pit*	Target Number	Size of Pit	Modifier
0-9 years	3	Small (home pool)	0
10-19 years	4	Medium (small pond)	+1
20-49 years	5	Large (Olympic pool)	+2
50-99 years	6	Huge (small lake)	+3
100+ years	7		
Toxicity	Modifier	Triggering Event†	Modifier
Moderate	0	Natural	-2
Severe	+1	Human intervention	0
Extreme	+2	Conscious attempt to form portal	+1 to +5

\* Age refers to the length of time the pit has been used as a dumping ground (round fractional years down).

† Triggering events are usually caused by unwitting human intervention, such as a ritual sacrifice or a powerful spell cast nearby. Actively trying to open a gateway adds a bonus to the target number, from +1 for a small group working an improvised ritual at night to +5 for a lengthy and elaborate ceremony.

The GM rolls 3d against the modified target number; a 17 or 18 always fails. Success means the portal opens and the waste-stalkers emerge. Failure means nothing happens, and further rolls are at a cumulative 3. On a critical failure, the GM should be creative.

**Example:** On the Mexican border, a swamp of industrial and human waste has been festering for over 20 years. It's big (nearly 2,000 square yards) and extremely poisonous. As a storm rolls in, a group of cultists performs a ceremony that reacts with the thunderclouds overhead. The target number is 5 (20-49 years) + 2 (extremely toxic) + 2 (large) + 0 (human intervention), for a total of 9. The GM rolls an 8. The wind shrieks, the earth shudders, and a gateway to Hell opens beneath the muck.

## WASTE-STALKER

**ST 15; DX 12; IQ 3; HT 14.**

**Will 13; Per 13; Speed 6.50; Dodge 9; Move 7.**  
**SM 0; 80 lbs.**

**Traits:** Amphibious (Accessibility, Only in toxic waste); Appearance (Monstrous); Bad Smell; Dependency (Toxic waste; Hourly; Accessibility, Only when out of Hell); Divine Curse (Stain all nearby holy symbols); Doesn't Breathe; DR 1; Frightens Animals; Hexapod\*; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (No Neck; No Vitals; Unliving); Phobia (The color white) (9); Striking ST 4; Teeth (Fangs); Telesend (Cosmic, No die roll required; Racial; Vague; World-Spanning); Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Brawling-14; Tactics-6.

\* As Quadruped (p. B263), but with six legs instead of four.

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